

Message Text

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S/S-O:DLMACK

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TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

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NODIS

-STADIS- FOR AMBASSADOR FROM ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CVIS, SA, US

SUBJECT: SAUDI VISA POLICY

REFS: (A) STATE 30982, (B) JIDDA 1584

1. AMBASSADOR ALIREZA CALLED ON ME UNDER INSTRUCTIONS ON
MARCH 5 AND READ THE FOLLOWING:

QUOTE:

THE TRADITIONAL POLICY OF SAUDI ARABIA IS TO EXCLUDE FROM
ENTERING THE COUNTRY ONLY THOSE WHO ADHERE TO AND ARE
AFFILIATED WITH ZIONISM WHICH IS A POLITICAL MOVEMENT
ANTAGONISTIC TO THE ARABS AND TO THE KINGDOM. THIS
EXCLUSION HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH RELIGION. IN THE PAST,
SAUDI ARABIA HAS ADMITTED MANY JEWS TO THE COUNTRY AND
WILL CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THIS POLICY AS LONG AS THEY ARE
NOT CONSIDERED PERSONA NON GRATA. MOREOVER, SAUDI ARABIA
DOES NOT CONSIDER OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE AMERICAN
GOVERNMENT REGARDLESS OF THEIR RELIGION AS PERSONA NON

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GRATA. THEREFORE, IT WILL CONTINUE TO PERMIT THEM TO

ENTER THE COUNTRY. HOWEVER, AS MR. ATHERTON IS WELL AWARE, IT IS DIFFICULT TO ALLOW THEM TO ENTER SAUDI ARABIA OR ANY

OTHER ARAB COUNTRY IN MISSIONS OF A MILITARY OR STRATEGIC NATURE, AS IN THE CASE OF THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS.

UNQUOTE.

2. IN WELCOMING OTHER PARTS OF THE ABOVE STATEMENT, I NOTED THAT THE LAST SENTENCE COULD GIVE US SERIOUS PROBLEMS. I SAID I HOPED THE AMBASSADOR WOULD DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH US IN ADVANCE IF HE SAW A VISA PROBLEM COMING UP, AND ALIREZA AGREED. HE ADDED THAT HE HAD RECENTLY BEEN IN EUROPE TO DISCUSS THE VISA ISSUE WITH PRINCE SAUD, WHO HAD GIVEN HIM LATITUDE TO USE HIS JUDGMENT WHEN NON-DEFENSE RELATED VISA CASES COME UP.

3. AT THAT POINT I HAD TO LEAVE FOR ANOTHER MEETING, AND CONVERSATION CONTINUED BETWEEN ALIREZA AND SOBER. REAFFIRMING THAT SAG WOULD NOT BE PREPARED TO ISSUE VISAS TO JEWS TO COME TO SAUDI ARABIA FOR WORK IN DEFENSE RELATED ACTIVITIES, ALIREZA CITED ISRAEL'S ALLEGED ATTITUDE THAT EVERY JEW IS A CITIZEN OF ISRAEL; HE ALSO REFERRED TO A U.S. SUPREME COURT DECISION REGARDING AMERICAN CITIZENS SERVING IN THE ISRAELI ARMY. SOBER SAID HIS UNDERSTANDING ON THE LATTER SUBJECTS WAS SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT FROM ALIREZA'S, AND SAID WE WOULD HAVE A PAPER PREPARED FOR ALIREZA ON THEM. ALIREZA SAID HE WOULD WELCOME OUR LEGAL OPINION AND WOULD PASS IT ON TO SAG.

4. IN CONGRATULATING ALIREZA ON THE ADVANCES HE HAD HELPED ACHIEVE IN OPENING UP SAUDI VISA POLICY, SOBER REFERRED TO CURRENT SUBSTANTIAL CONGRESSIONAL PRESSURE WHICH WAS REFLECTED IN LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS PASSED BY SENATE AND, IN MODIFIED VERSION, BY HOUSE. HE ALSO NOTED THAT MAJOR PERCENTAGE OF AMERICANS RESIDENT IN OR TRAVELING TO SAUDI ARABIA WERE CONNECTED WITH DEFENSE RELATED ACTIVITIES. ALIREZA SAID HE THOUGHT THE BEST THING WAS NOT TO TRY AND SETTLE THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE NOW. HE AND SOBER AGREED THAT IT WOULD BE MOST IMPORTANT
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TO STAY IN TOUCH AND TO TRY TO SOLVE ANY SPECIFIC PROBLEMS THAT MIGHT ARISE.

5. MEMCON OF TALK WITH ALIREZA BEING POUCHED TO YOU. WE ARE GIVING IT EXTREMELY LIMITED DISTRIBUTION. TOGETHER WITH PRINCE SAUD'S RECENT COMMENT TO HORAN, ALIREZA'S MESSAGE CONSTITUTES FIRST CLEAR-CUT SAUDI POLICY STATEMENT THAT JEWS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IN SAUDI ARABIA ON DEFENSE

RELATED BUSINESS AND WILL INEVITABLY CREATE CONSIDERABLE

PROBLEMS WHEN SPECIFIC CASES ARISE, UNLESS WE ARE ABLE
TO GET SOME MODIFICATION. THERE MAY BE SOME POSSIBLE
OPENING THROUGH THE LEGAL OPINION WE HAVE PROMISED
ALIREZA ON LEGAL QUESTIONS REGARDING AMERICAN JEWS AND
ISRAEL, ALTHOUGH I SEE NO REASON TO BE OPTIMISTIC ON
THIS COUNT.

6. WE WILL, OF COURSE, CONTINUE TO KEEP YOU INFORMED.
KISSINGER

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